



## **Supporting Opportunities to Build Everyday Responsibility**

### **(SOBER) Act**

*Sponsored by: Reps. Dusty Johnson, Lou Correa, Don Bacon, Suzan DelBene, Burgess Owens, and Angie Craig.*

#### **Background:**

Responsible alcohol consumption is safe and enjoyable, however, problematic alcohol use by a relatively small share of drinkers creates enormous social costs. A recent [CDC study](#) found destructive alcohol use cost the U.S. nearly \$250 billion in 2010 alone.

People for whom alcohol is an ongoing criminogenic risk are generally not deterred by the threat of prison or fines because alcohol has compromised their ability to rationally act in their own self interest. Nor does their behavior change after release from custody. Similarly, substance abuse treatment alone - that is, without consequences for failure - is insufficient as demonstrated by the high rate of relapses by participants in such programs.

24/7 sobriety provides a better path. The program couples diligent supervision with consistent but fair punishments. The program allows participants the opportunity to continue to live their lives largely uninterrupted, but sets clear guardrails around their behavior. Participants must stop drinking, and in exchange are allowed to remain in the community, keep their jobs and driver's licenses, and work toward long-term sobriety.

24/7 sobriety was pioneered in South Dakota in 2005. An evaluation found a [12 percent](#) reduction in DUI arrests in jurisdictions that adopted the program. The same evaluation found the program was associated with a [9 percent](#) reduction in domestic violence arrests, and even a [4.2 percent](#) reduction in all-cause mortality. Similar successes were seen through other state-run programs.

#### **Legislation:**

Our legislation aims to expand the success of 24/7 programs nationwide. This bill would create a grant within the Office of Justice Programs at the Department of Justice, and authorize the appropriation of \$50 million each year for five years. Specifically, the SOBER Act would:

- Provide funding to help sustain and expand existing 24/7 sobriety programs;
- Incentivize the creation of 24/7 sobriety programs; and
- Provide data from grantees and a report from the NIJ assessing the impact of 24/7 sobriety programs on violence, crime, recidivism, and incarceration rates.

The total annual appropriation authorized under this legislation represents less than [0.04 percent](#) of the estimated annual cost of alcohol-attributable crime. In South Dakota, a \$400,000 investment in a statewide 24/7 sobriety program led to at least \$28 million in savings in jail costs. This translates to [\\$70 saved](#) for every \$1 spent.

**To cosponsor:** please contact Elizabeth Lloyd at [Elizabeth.Lloyd@mail.house.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.Lloyd@mail.house.gov)